



**THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA
COMMITTEE OF BAR EXAMINERS/OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS**

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**IMPACT OF THE JULY 2008 EARTHQUAKE
ON CALIFORNIA BAR EXAMINATION SCORES**

During the last minutes of the morning session of the first day of the California Bar Examination (CBX) on Tuesday July 29, 2008, an earthquake struck Southern California. Following the earthquake, the morning sessions continued until time was called, which at most test centers was at the conclusion of the scheduled three hours of testing time. The remainder of the 3-day examination was administered without further significant seismic activity.

There were nine southern California test centers that felt the earthquake. The degree of shaking (and staff, proctor and examinee reactions to it) varied across the affected test centers and impacted the administration of the examination at each test center in different ways. For example, some examinees at one test center ducked under their desks and some acoustic tiles fell off the ceiling. At another nearby test center, the examinees continued to work without interruption until time was called. Thus, the overall effect of the earthquake on examinee scores on essay questions 1 through 3 could vary across test centers as a function of what the examinees at those centers experienced, and the actions they took personally in response to the earthquake.

Immediately following conclusion of the entire examination, the Committee of Bar Examiners (Committee) retained several experts in testing and statistics to conduct a study to determine whether there was an impact on examinees' scores because of the earthquake; and, if there was an impact, what actions should be taken. As a result of that study, it was determined that in fact some, but not all, of the examinees taking the examination in the Southern California test centers were impacted and that those examinees should have points added to their examination answer scores.

As part of the process, two decisions were made. First, that the CBX scores and pass/fail decisions for the 3,625 test takers at the seven Northern California test centers would be determined in the normal manner; i.e., as if these examinees were the only ones taking the examination. For example, the equation used to convert their written (i.e., essay plus Performance Test) raw scores to scale scores was based on these examinees' scores alone. Thus, their chances of passing were not affected by what was done with the examinees at the other test centers.

The second decision was to determine whether the examinees at a test center who felt the earthquake had generally lower average scores on essay questions 1 through 3 than would be predicted on the basis of their scores on the rest of the examination. If this analysis found that the test center's average scores were lower than expected, then raw scores of the examinees at that test center would be adjusted upwards by the same amount to bring the test center's average up to its expected level. In other words, there would be a test center-wide adjustment. No adjustment would be made if a test center's examinees generally earned higher than expected scores.

Rather than trying to determine exactly what question an examinee was working on at the time of the earthquake, raw points were added to an examinee's score on essay question #3. Adjustments ranged from 0 (when there appeared to be no impact) to 5 points. After this adjustment was made, the written scale scores for the Southern California examinees were computed using the same conversion equation as was used with the Northern California applicants. As a consequence of these procedures, neither Northern nor Southern California examinees unduly benefitted or were harmed by the adjustment process. Below is a table that reflects the number of raw points, which in some cases was none, by which examinees' essay question #3 scores were adjusted.

Test Center	Point Adjustments to Essay #3
Anaheim Convention Center	2
California Market Place	2
Century Plaza Hotel	0
LAX Radisson Hotel	0
Ontario Convention Center	3
Ontario Convention Center*	1
San Diego Concourse	5
San Diego Convention Center	3
Sheraton Four Points Hotel	0

The full text of the Committee consultants' report, which contains a more detailed account of how the impacts were determined, is available on the Admissions' portion of the State Bar's Web site at www.calbar.ca.gov/admissions.

The Committee believes that the process by which the scores were adjusted for the July 2008 California Bar Examination is the fairest for all examinees and that it has taken appropriate steps to adjust the scores of those who were impacted by the earthquake. Requests for reconsideration of grades based on an individual's personal circumstance as a result of the earthquake will not be accepted.

*This test center was the larger of the two test centers at the Ontario Convention Center and examinees at this test center received an additional 5 minutes for the Tuesday morning session of the examination.

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